

GOVERNOR'S
REASONS
FOR VETO:

The Governor said that, though HB 2174 was meant to remove a potential hardship for rural areas where emergency training is unavailable, the bill was unnecessary because current law permits a variance in the attendant-training requirement where local conditions make it impossible to obtain this training. The Governor said it would be imprudent to reduce training standards in all rural areas.

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Rep. Melton said that the Governor did not get correct information before vetoing the bill. Testimony from all over the state indicated that the bill was desperately needed in rural areas. In the small communities, he said, EMS vehicles with only one trained volunteer attendant and one driver do a good job in saving lives. Rep. Melton said the local-variance procedure cited by the Governor has not worked well. Local communities are unfamiliar with the variance procedure. And when variances have been sought they have not been issued by the Department of Health. The original sponsors of the emergency-attendant law, Sen. Sarpalius and former Sen. Doggett, were aware of the problems that have arisen and had no problem with the correction made by the bill, he said.

Proof of citizenship for voter registration
(HB 2316 by S. Thompson)

DIGEST: HB 2316 would have amended the Texas Election Code to require naturalized citizens to state only that they are naturalized citizens, instead of having to indicate the court of naturalization or its location, on application forms for voter registration.

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The Governor said the information about the court of naturalization helped protect the integrity of the state's electoral process by ensuring the validity of voter-registration applications.

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Rep. Senfronia Thompson said she accepted the Governor's reasons for the veto. She added, however, that the Secretary of State had requested the bill to

avert a potential lawsuit similar to a one brought in district court in Tarrant County last summer. That court held that voter-registration forms showing a middle initial rather than the entire middle name had to be accepted. The Secretary of State's office feared the court-of-naturalization requirement, which had been causing similar confusion, would provoke similar legal action. "I have no problem with the veto," Rep. Thompson said. "If they file another lawsuit, it's just going to cost the state more money."

NOTES: The House Study Group analysis of HB 2316 appeared in the May 17 Daily Floor Report.

Special paint for schoolchildren's crosswalks
(HB 2349 by S.Hudson)

DIGEST: HB 2349 would have required local governments, when repainting crosswalks in the course of normal maintenance, to paint crosswalks used primarily by schoolchildren with a distinctive yellow paint.

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The Governor said the bill would violate federal regulations governing traffic control and safety devices, which mandate that school crosswalks be distinguished by white painted markings. The regulations are intended to promote safety by requiring uniformity of traffic-control markings on all streets, roads, and highways, he said.

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Rep. Sam Hudson, calling this a "most unwarranted veto," said the Governor must have gotten "bad information from his general counsel." While federal regulations require that crosswalks be white, Hudson said they make no specific mention of school crosswalks. He said Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) officials in Washington told him they were willing to make an exception for a state law requiring yellow school crosswalks, but only if such a state law existed. To get the exception he had to pass the bill, he said, but because there is not now an exception, and because the Governor's staff failed to uncover the exception negotiations, the bill was vetoed. "Something that would have been helpful to all schoolchildren in Texas is so easily brushed aside by a veto because of shoddy research," Rep. Hudson said.